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**Permaculture: A Vision and
Strategy for Sustainable
Development?
A Malawian Case Study.**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at
Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of perceptions of sustainable development and whether permaculture contributes to sustainable development in Malawi. Underpinning this thesis are two key contentions: that there is insufficient exploration of the broader societal and cultural values orientating current sustainable development theory, practice and policy; and permaculture, as ethically informed social movement network that promotes a design system for sustainable interaction with the environment, is both a vision and strategy for sustainable development.

A qualitative, ethnographic case study approach was employed, using semi-structured interviews, in-field observation and permaculture document analysis. Research revealed perceptions of sustainable development were very similar to perceptions of permaculture, suggesting that most people saw permaculture as significantly contributing to their understanding of sustainable development. A key finding was involvement in permaculture arose from a plurality of instrumental goals and identification with social movement values, which in turn influenced perceptions of sustainable development. Several factors emerged as influential in perceptions of both sustainable development and permaculture: culture, level of involvement in permaculture, degree of initiative activity and the role of leaders and committed individuals within an initiative.

These findings are seen to have implications for future sustainable development policy and practice. The universality of sustainability issues within perceptions of both sustainable development and permaculture, and the establishment of independent projects and spontaneous adoption of instrumental aspects of permaculture in an area surrounding one research site suggest permaculture has potential to effect sustainable change in individuals and culture both within and outside of initiative parameters. Likewise, demonstrated embodiment of permaculture values in identity, action and lifestyle opens space for the inclusion of personal development and personal responsibility within the concept of sustainable development.

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Abbreviations

AFROL	African Online News
AFSI	L'Aquila Food Security Initiative
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AIS	Agriculture Input Subsidy (Programme)
ANAMED	Action For Natural Medicine
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability ` Analysis
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency, United States of America
COP	Conference of Parties
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations
EAD	Environmental Affairs Department, Government of Malawi
FANRPAN	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GTZ	German Society for Technical Cooperation
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
IPCC	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
MAWO	Maziko Amoyo Wabwino Organisation (Foundation for a Better Life Organisation)
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Malawi
MVAC	Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee
NAPA	National Adaptation Programmes of Action, Government of Malawi
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSCM	National Seed Company of Malawi
NSO	National Statistics Office, Government of Malawi
PC	Permaculture
PRIA	Permaculture Research Institute of Australia
SDNP	Sustainable Development Network Programme, Government of Malawi

SFN	Sustainable Food and Nutrition (Programme)
SHN	School Health and Nutrition (Programme)
UNCSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSD	United Nations Division For Sustainable Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-UNCTAD	United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Capacity-building Task Force on Trade, Development and Environment
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WFP	World Food Programme, United Nations
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development